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June 7 - June 20 // Vol. 7, No. 12 // ErieReader.com

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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From the Editors

The art of the reset

It's getting to be that time again. Warm feelings abound as we find ourselves in the midst of June. A preamble to the official commencement of summer, this time finds us setting the scene for the activities ahead.

Let yourself step outside and breathe in the air. Soak it in and appreciate it. Instead of fast-forwarding through summer's opening credits, hit the pause button. Breathe in again. Take your time. Collect yourself.

Just because the world is speeding around us in circles doesn't mean we shouldn't take a necessary pit stop every so often. For some, that might mean going on taking a vacation, for others it might just be an hour or two that we can use to reset our thoughts and play some much-needed catch up.

Despite the change of season, some people aren't ready to downshift into summer just yet. We talk with local hip-hop artist William Weyes, who is making strides and working hard to further his art.

One of the ultimate forms of this is retirement, and in this issue we celebrate the career of one of Erie's most identifiable citizens who is doing just that. After 49 years, John Vanco is stepping down as director of the Erie Art Museum. Nick Warren met with him for a talk about his time there. From its beginnings as the Erie Art Club, Vanco traces the evolution of the museum, offering his personal opinions on where art comes from along the way.

Despite the change of season, some people aren't ready to downshift into summer just yet. We talk with local hip-hop artist William Weyes, who is making strides and working hard to further his art.

These next few weeks also mark the start of several regularly occurring summer events. The Highmark Mid Day Art Break at the Erie Art Museum begins the afternoon this issue hits stands and continues throughout the summer. The day after that marks the first Block Party, an evolving Erie tradition that will happen five more Thursdays before summer concludes. Wednesday, June 14 will be the first concert for the Sunset Music Series, which also runs for six weeks.

So no matter how you need to reset, there are options out there to help you do it. While it's still okay to worry about tomorrow, always remember to appreciate today.

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Please see www.SSJNN.org/contest for full details and downloadable contest entry documents.

All proposals must be received by 4:00 pm EST on July 31, 2017



CONTEST SCHEDULE

- JUNE 1:** Contest Open
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- JULY 31:** Submission Deadline – 4:00 pm EST
- AUGUST 4:** Finalists announced, online voting opens
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- AUGUST 18:** Voting closes
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Enough Words

Parenting, autism, and health care



On his son's birthday Daniel Doubet (left) holds the now 3-year-old Dash in his arms, both staying resilient in the face of an uncertain future.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Daniel Doubet

First Words

When my oldest son was born, the miracle of life became apparent for me before I even saw him. The nurse, the doctor, my wife, and I all instructing, encouraging, shouting – and then, suddenly: a new voice in the room. A new voice in the world. Dash's first cries made my knees buckle and my head swim.

Three years later, my knees would give way to again hear that voice, or his brother's, put two words together.

I wasn't always set on having children, because, looking back, I was afraid of the commitment of fatherhood and introducing my children to an often cruel and unrelenting world. Even then, I didn't realize my family would struggle against the core of what our society values. It's now clear that my wife and

I am all that stands between my boys and a civilization that doesn't want them and is monstrously indifferent to their needs.

Our worries started around the time Dash turned one. He wasn't speaking at all, wasn't holding eye contact, and wasn't responding to his name. My wife, a trained family therapist, identified these as possible signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our family doctor told us to wait and see if it gets better. Thus began our introduction to a system that often cares more about reducing expenditures and paperwork than giving children the best possible outcomes. We have since changed providers.

One of the most insidious aspects of the disorder is that it's behavioral: There's no blood test, no way to be sure, or rule it out, because the cause is unknown. So, we were on a cloud of unknowing, which led to doubt. Were we just overreacting?

New-parents' jitters? Was this some mild Munchausens? It's an incredible weight to bear: not knowing what's wrong with your child, how far they can progress – whether they will even know that you love them, or be able to tell you that they love you back.

And there's no way to know if your concerns are unfounded. Most react with hollow optimism: "hopefully he'll grow out of it and start talking soon." What other words can one offer? To this day I find myself hoping that people won't casually ask me about my kids, because every time I don't say "I'm absolutely terrified about their future," I'm lying so we can both go about our day.

We didn't see improvements, so we aggressively pursued all available avenues for resources. A diagnosis of ASD is generally unheard of until around at least age two, but every bit of quality, sourced information we could find indicates that the

best possible outcomes result from the earliest therapies and treatments. The clock was ticking.

So, after much work and testing we got Dash a recommendation for Early Intervention services. This required lots of paperwork, trips to multiple agencies, and recommendations from various specialists. Words upon words upon words.

Finally, we began to schedule therapies for play/social interactions and speech therapy. Improvements began almost immediately. Whereas before Dash would pick toys up and drop them on a hard surface, he began to bring them to us. He began to become fascinated by books, and then began to seek attention from us: praise, instruction, help, and – most crucially – affection.

Soon after he was signing "more," and he began to respond to his name. He began communicating. He would not be alone. He would know our love.

But Dash has a long way to go. Children his age have vocabularies 10 times what he has. And as we approach his third birthday, he transitions out of the Early Intervention program and into the Intermediate. The difference between these two is the source of funding: Early Intervention is covered by the Department of Welfare and the Intermediate Program is funded through the Department of Education. This means treatment is at the whim of politics, and his care will compete with interests like for-profit charter schools,

starved public schools, and the almighty taxpayer.

The research is clear: The best outcomes are derived from intensive Applied Behavioral Therapy, 35-40 hours a week before age five. We have been told that the Intermediate program covers 2.5 hours of preschool a week with 15 other students.

And the clock is still ticking. And Dash's brother, Devereaux, approaching his second birthday, no longer says "dada" and exhibits signs of sensory issues. Reaux's be-

One of the most insidious aspects of the disorder is that it's behavioral: There's no blood test, no way to be sure, or rule it out, because the cause is unknown. So, we were on a cloud of unknowing, which led to doubt.

havior has already warranted an official diagnosis of ASD.

My boys' therapists deserve unending gratitude. Like most of us, they are underpaid, overworked, and underappreciated, and these folks give their best to the children they serve. Dash's performance exceeds some of my greatest fears, as he'll greet me warmly when I come home, and he'll give me hugs or ask me "up?" I live for these words.

Their Words

Some argue my kids are only entitled to what I can provide for them, and I should be grateful that anything exists at all. I am not the only parent or community member with skin in

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NEWS & VIEWS

the game. Many others face tough choices, and bleaker outcomes, with consequences even more dire than what my children face.

Moreover, many parents don't have the bandwidth to aggressively fight for the resources their kids need. Worse still, some are denied access because of their zip code or income. Even with our challenges, I have to acknowledge that my family has many privileges.

We are all told to pick ourselves up by our bootstraps. I should come up with \$50,000 dollars annually for a dedicated behavioral therapist for each of my children. If we can't afford it, it's our failure, as parents (as are parents of one in 68 kids).

Despite the cynical absurdity of this claim, and despite how hard my wife and I struggle to provide for them, I hang my head with guilt every day. The dominant narrative says those with every advantage and luxury should sacrifice as little as possible, before those with disadvantage have what they need. If you disagree, note the health care bill passed by Congress cuts \$800 billion for highest income earners, and denies health care to 24 million people.

If something catastrophic happened to me today, my family would be in ruins, and, on a long enough timeline, something catastrophic will definitely happen to me. Could my wife work with two children with special needs? How could she get the health care coverage they need? How could I work if something happened to my wife? What would happen to my boys without both of us championing their cause?

The answers bring me only terror. It's a terror in every parent's heart, but for my family, it's likely never to go away.

Enough Words

Why do we allow ourselves to live in terror? We have the resources in this country for all of our schools to be palaces, to provide for the needs of our most vulnerable, and we choose not to: Why? So Scott Wagner and Betsy DeVos and Donald Trump might add a shred of value to their immense wealth? We are not in a time of scarcity; we are in a time of scarcity for the many, and

unprecedented wealth for the few.

Every public figure talks about how much they care about children, but looking at actual policy, it's clear that keeping taxes down is far more important than providing the resources my children need. Or Erie's schools. Or for eldercare. Or for the differently-abled. Or Meals on Wheels. Or job training. Or a community college. Or for community centers in untapped communities.

While I deeply appreciate all of the volunteer work, the organizations building visibility and contributing to research, charity is just not enough. I understand the need to run, walk, raise money for ASD research and support, but that pales in comparison to what is needed: a nationally-funded mandate to provide children with ASD the full range of necessary therapies for the best possible outcomes.

To do that, we need to build the power to stand up to those vested in the current state of things: those who believe people and democracy support money and markets, not the other way around. Make no mistake, that's our value system, and that's who's leading us right now. Our power is derived from the organization of people, who see their self interest is tied directly to the value we have for all.

Because I am terrified of what will happen to my kids when I die, I am building power for the equity and wellbeing of all. If I fail, when I depart this earth, my children will be relegated to stations of the unwanted and unworthy. Many already find themselves in those stations, and I am working for a society that provides and protects people for who they are. Only together can we provide the means for each of us to reach our full capacity as human beings, including my sons. That's why I'm organizing hundreds of people locally and working with thousands across Pennsylvania. We are building a movement for each other and ourselves. Enough words, it's time to get to work for a society that puts people first.

Daniel Doubet was recently named statewide executive director of Keystone Progress. He can be reached at dan@keystoneprogress.org.

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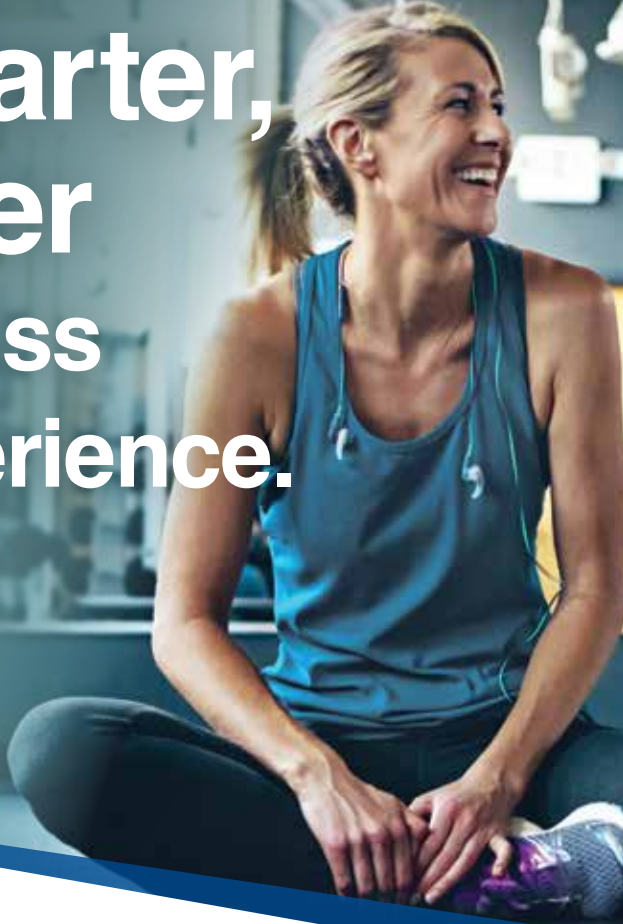
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News of the Weird

The lineage of asparagus and liquor store labyrinths

Troubling Airwaves

A country-and-western radio station in Benson, Arizona (near Tucson), owned by Paul Lotsof, has periodically run "public service announcements" about one of Lotsof's pet peeves: the harsh sentences usually given to mere "collectors" of child pornography. Many, he believes, are non-dangerous, daydreaming hermits but often imprisoned for long stretches. Thus, his PSAs publicize tips for avoiding the police, such as saving child porn only on an external computer drive (and hiding the drive securely). Despite recent community outrage (causing Lotsof to retire the announcements), he remains defiant that, since he personally avoids child porn, he is merely exercising a free-speech right. [Washington Post, 5-11-2017]

Can't Possibly Be True

The inexplicable ease with which foreign hackers attack U.S. computers and security systems is finally grabbing the attention of officials. In a March Washington Post report, a technology expert from Britain's King's College London told a reporter of his astonishment to realize that the "security chips" on Congressional staff members' identification badges are fake: The badge "doesn't actually have a proper chip," he said. "It has a picture of a chip." Apparently, he added, "It's (there) only to prevent chip envy." [Washington Post, 3-31-2017]

Suzette Welton has been in prison in Alaska for 17 years based almost solely on now-debunked foren-

sic evidence, but the state's lack of a clemency process means she cannot challenge her life sentence unless she proves "complete" innocence. Evidence that the fire that killed her son was "arson" was based not on science but on widely believed (but wrong) folklore on how intentional fires burn differently than accidental ones. (The bogus arson "trademarks" are similar to those used to convict Texan Cameron Todd Willingham, who suffered an even worse fate than Welton's: Willingham was executed for his "arson" in 2004.) [Alaska Dispatch News, 5-14-2017]

Reverence for the lineage of asparagus continues in epic yearly Anglican church festivities in Worcester, England, where in April celebrants obtained a special blessing for the vegetable by local priests as a costumed asparagus pranced through the street praising the stalks as representing "the generosity of God." Critics (including clergy from other parishes) likened the parades to a Monty Python sketch, and "an infantile pantomime," with one pleading plaintively, "Really, for (God's) sake," can't the Church of England offer "more dignified" worship? [Daily Telegraph, 4-25-2017]

Leading Economic Indicators

(1) Andrew Bogut, signed as a free agent by the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers in March and expected to be a key player in the team's quest to defend its league championship, checked into his first game and played 58 seconds before crashing into a bench and breaking his leg. For that 58 sec-

onds, the Cavs owe Bogut \$383,000. (2) Jose Calderon signed as a free agent with the Golden State Warriors in March, but the NBA-leading Warriors changed their mind (for unforeseen reasons) two hours after the deal and released Calderon. For his 119 minutes as a Warrior (6:06 p.m. to 8:05 p.m.), Calderon was paid \$415,000. [Cleveland.com, 3-7-2017] [San Jose Mercury News, 3-2-2017]

Police Report

In May, as Taunton, Massachusetts, police were about to arrest Amy Rebello-McCarthy, 39, for DUI after she left the road and crashed through several mailboxes (with the crash causing all of her tires to deflate), she, laughing, told officers there was one other thing: She had a bearded dragon in her bra (where it was riding while she drove). The lizard was turned over to animal control. [Providence Journal, 5-16-2017]

Felicia Nevins complained to reporters in May that the Pasco County (Florida) Sheriff's Office had improperly drawn attention to her on a matter of a purely personal nature that she had called for help, concerned that the sperm she was storing for in-vitro fertilization (kept under liquid nitrogen in a thermos) might explode. Deputies had placed the details (but not her name) on the office's Facebook page, but the Tampa Bay Times deduced her name from public sources. [Tampa Bay Times, 5-20-2017]

Fine Points of the Law

In a legislative battle waged since a 1979 state court decision, some

North Carolinians tried once again this year to change a state law that explicitly states that once a person (almost always, of course, a "female") has "consented" to an act of sexual intercourse, that consent cannot be withdrawn even if the encounter turns violent. (The violence might be prosecuted as an "assault," but never the more serious crime of "rape.") Said state Sen. Jeff Jackson, whose bill to change the law failed in April to get a legislative hearing, "We're the only state in the country where 'no' doesn't mean 'no.'" [WRAL-TV (Raleigh-Durham), 5-2-2017]

Bright Ideas

Skills: (1) In May, the British tribunal dealing with student cheating rejected the appeal of a law student who was caught taking an in-class exam with her textbook open (permitted) but containing handwritten notes in the margins not permitted, but written in invisible ink legible via the UV light on her pen. (2) On testing day in March for Romania's 14- and 15-year-olds, administrators of the country's popular DEX online dictionary, acting on suspicion, changed the definitions of two words likely to be improperly looked up by cheaters during the exam. "(H)undreds" of school searches for the words took place that morning, but administrators were still mulling an appropriate punishment for the cheaters (who were, of course, easily identified by their misapplication of the suspect words). [NBC News, 5-6-2017] [BBC News, 3-16-2017]

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NEWS & VIEWS

ban producers are forced to improvise in order to bring products to market like Orestes Estevez, a Havana winemaker, who finds condoms indispensable, according to an April Associated Press dispatch. The "most remarkable sight" the reporter saw was "hundreds of (open) bottles capped with condoms," which inflate from gases as the fruit ferments. When fermentation is done, the condom goes limp. (The AP also noted that fishermen use condoms to carry bait far from shore and which also increase tugging resistance when nibbling fish fight the line.) [Associated Press via Virgin Islands Daily News, 4-4-2017]

Awesome!

India's Supreme Court approved an order recently that forced bars and liquor stores to close down if they were located less than 500 meters (1,640 feet) from state or national highways. India Times reported in April that the Aishwarya Bar in North Paravoor, Kerala, is still (legally) operating at its old location even though it is clearly within the 500-meter restricted area. The owner explained that since he owns the land behind the bar, too, he had constructed a "serpentine" wooden maze in back and front that requires any entering customer to take the equivalent number of steps it would take to walk 500 meters. (A tax office official reluctantly accepted the arrangement.) [India Times, 4-8-2017]

Canadian Anton Pilipa, 39, who suffers from schizophrenia, was discovered safe in the Amazon rainforest state of Rondonia, Brazil, in November 2016, which was the first sighting of him since his disappearance in March 2012. He was unable to communicate well and had no ID or money, but his family has actively been searching for him and believe the only way he could have traveled from the family home in Scarborough, Ontario, to Brazil (6,300 miles) was by hitchhiking or walking. (Bonus: The area in which he was found is noted for alligators and snakes.) [CTV News, 2-9-2017]

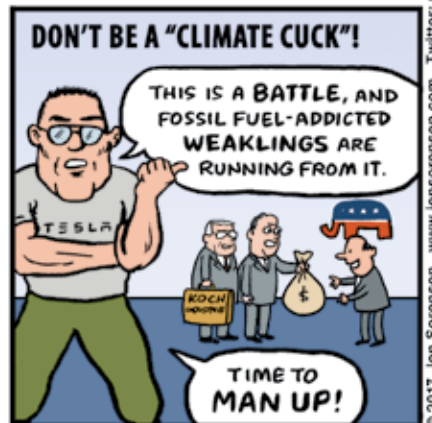
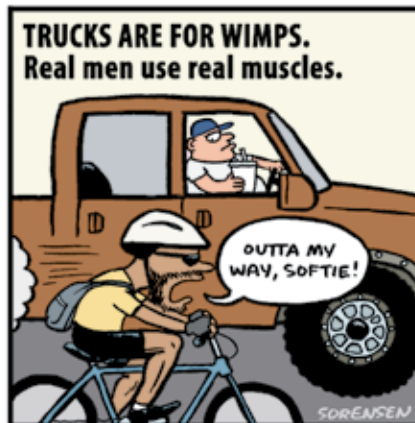
A News of the Weird Classic (November 2013)

Secrets of Highly Successful Business Owners: When Michelle Esquenazi was asked by a New York Post reporter in September (2013) why her all-female crew of licensed bounty hunters (Empire Bail Bonds of New York) is so successful at tricking bail-jumpers into the open, she offered a (five-letter-long) euphemism for a female body part. "It's timeless," she counseled. "Of course he's going to open his door for a nice piece of (deleted)." "The thing about defendants is no matter who they are (of whatever color), they're all dumb. Every single last one of them is stupid." [New York Post, 9-27-2013]

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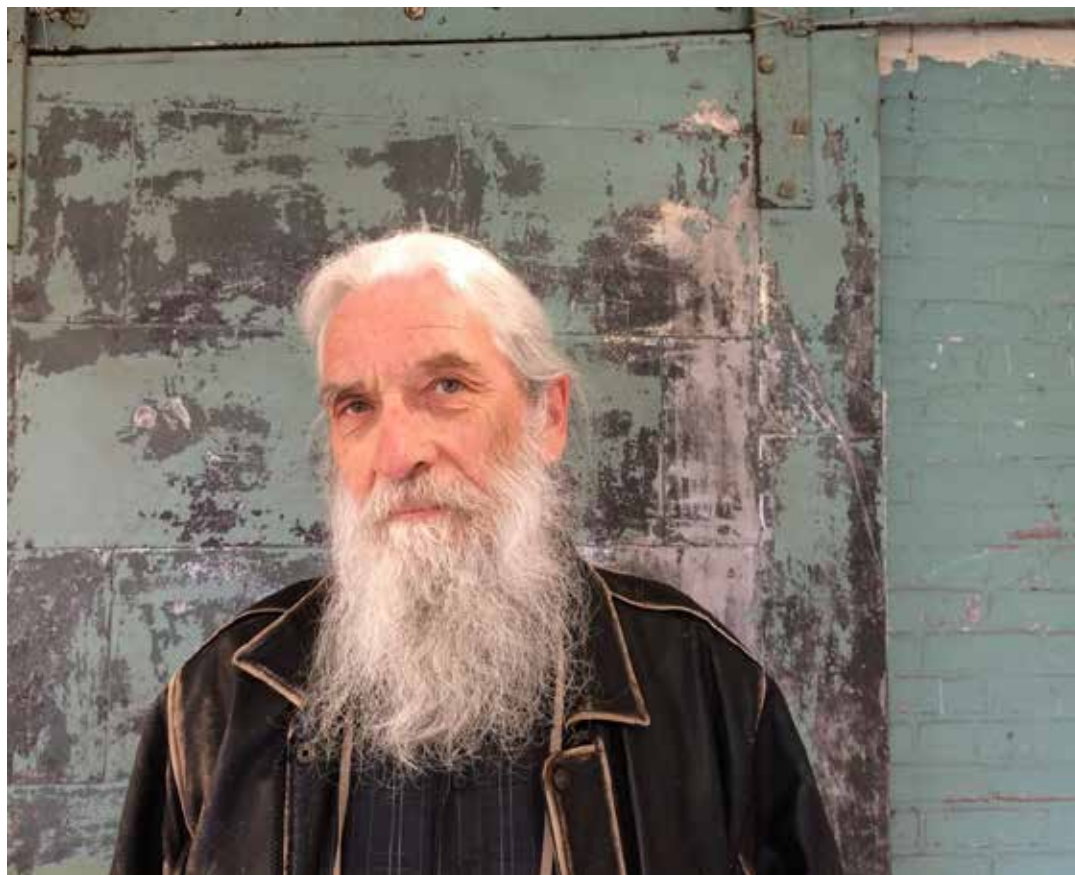
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A Career Curated

An exit interview with the Erie Art Museum's John Vanco



KELLY ARMOR

By Nick Warren

For almost half a century, John Vanco has been Erie's champion for the arts. In November of last year, he announced his plans for retirement. At age 72, he's been privy to countless exhibits, artists, and events that have taken place at the museum. Virtually everyone involved in Erie's art scene is familiar with him on some level. With his trademark beard and long grey hair, he gives off the aura of a wise wizard of the arts.

Growing up in Edinboro, Vanco went on to Allegheny College, traveling to Meadville before I-79 joined the two destinations. He interned at the Whitney Museum of American Art, a world-famous institution on Manhattan's Upper East Side. In 1968, he returned to Erie County and began working at the Erie Art Museum.

Long the centerpiece of Erie's cultural scene, the museum has grown tremendously over the decades. Through it all, Vanco has been at the helm, steering the ship as both the museum's director and lead curator.

Vanco will be honored at this year's ARTrageous event, taking place at the Erie Art Museum on Saturday, July 10 *(see sidebar for more information).* He'll stay on through the Blues and Jazz Festival, which he will continue to oversee after his retirement. With no formal last day set at this time, Vanco insists he'll "work through the end of August" unless they find a new director prior to that. With the amount of

work built up after 49 years, he's sure to have plenty to do.

To get a small glimpse at those decades of work, I sat down with him for what seemed like a strange sort of "exit interview." We met up at Jekyll & Hyde's for a casual discussion. People drifted in and out saying hello as Vanco

munched on popcorn, slowly sipping a craft beer. We talked about the museum's history and future, waxed abstractly about the nature of art, and joked about a mummified cat.

Nick Warren: You must have seen countless iterations of the art scene. Styles fading, faces changing. How has Erie's art scene evolved since the early days?

John Vanco: Well, there are just *more* arts activities across the board, I would say. Despite the ravaging of the arts in schools, the level of professionalism has certainly increased. Looking at the arts organizations, there have been tremendous changes, just enormous. To think about where the [Erie] Art Center was when I started, just a little house that didn't even do exhibits all year round, that's been a tremendous change. The Playhouse. When I started, the Playhouse was at the Penn Theatre in Wesleyville and that didn't last for long, they were homeless for a while.

NW: And they just had their one hundred year anniversary.

JV: Right. And the Art Club is even older, that dates back

to 1898. The organization has been around that whole time but it was still a volunteer organization. So, just the professionalization of the arts organizations, with the Philharmonic always being the exception, with the fact that they had a professional music director. Now they also have an executive director and a full staff.

NW: Similar to the Erie Art Museum as well, starting from a volunteer organization, growing into a fully-staffed, 16,000 square foot modern building. Not to mention places like Erie Arts and Culture, the ExpERIENCE Children's museum, and so forth.

JV: That's right, there was no Children's Museum, no Maritime Museum. The historical society was a volunteer organization. The Erie Public Museum was kind of a marginal operation. All those things have changed dramatically. It's incredible actually since our population hasn't grown.

NW: Right, three years ago we were over 100,000.

JV: Well, yes the city population has dropped, and even the county population has hardly grown over that peri-



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The face of art in Erie: over the years, John Vanco's look hasn't changed all that much. Pictured in the mid 1970s (below), Vanco poses at the Erie Summer Festival of the Arts amid the construction of a geodesic dome.

od. It's essentially the same as when I started.

NW: So the Erie Art Museum started as the Erie Art Club, which begat the Erie Art Center, correct?

JV: The Art Club was first in the library at Perry Square and then in 1941 they moved with the public museum over to the Curtze Mansion. In 1956, the Art Club bought the building next door, the Wood-Morrison House, and that became known as the Art Center. They were calling it the Art Center of Erie, and when I started I said, let's call it Erie Art Center [laughs], got rid of the "of". So then in 1983, when we moved over to State Street we called it the Erie Art Museum.

NW: How did feel to walk into the Art Center in 1968? How could someone in 2017 visualize that?

JV: Well, it definitely was not a professional operation at that point [laughs], though they did have some good shows. They were presenting some traveling exhibitions. There was certainly a lot of enthusiasm and a core of hardworking volunteers. But there a was a relatively narrow perception of what "art" is, I think.

NW: Was it more so the "fine art" mentality?

JV: Yes. It was painting and sculpture.

NW: And obviously the museum has embraced things like folk art and textiles so much. You don't think that was as appreciated then?

JV: No, and from the very beginning, work in craft media wasn't regarded at the same level as say, a painting. There's that traditional hierarchy which I've always just denied. That's really not the way to look at things, you know? I can be really taken by a painting, or I can be really really taken by a wood carving, a piece of pottery, or a textile. It's all legitimate to me. It's all expressions of the same thing.

NW: Regardless of form, necessarily.

JV: Yeah, and popular arts, like comic art, that, again, wasn't in the canon. It wasn't something that museums were presenting. That idea was just starting to happen.

NW: And film, too, to a certain degree.

JV: Well, film has been recognized as an art form by people who love film. To me, I think film is the great art of the 20th century. There's no question about it, that's where it all comes together.

NW: It combines pretty much every element you can think of, if you do it right.

JV: Like opera in the 18th century, it's something that brings together all these different aspects of the arts and presents it in a new way.

NW: With people working as a team, too.

JV: Yes, undermining the idea of the "solo" artist. Which is true, and is a component of it, but so much of art is collaborative. Of course it's always been that way with music. You can have a solo performer but you also have to have bands and choruses.

NW: Yeah, you can only say so much on your own sometimes. I feel like some of the older, canonical stuff was based on "the artist" as an individual creating works. With painting and sculpture you can say that "this specific person created" this.

JV: Right, and that's a very western concept too. Looking at art from the rest of the world and looking at it in a way that's not just a formal analysis, the way that we tend to look at western art, you have to embrace the zeitgeist in which the art was created, trying to understand the function that the art has in the society in which it was created. We can look at something as art, but to people in that society, they don't think of it that way. It's a part of their belief system, it's religious or meditative. It's got

In 2010, artist John Bavaro created a series of portraits using only an iPhone or iPad. Recreating the Roman Fayum portrait style with his finger as a stylus, Bavaro was quick to choose Vanco as one of his subjects.

other functions.

NW: Were there any specific exhibits you wish you could go back and see again, or any artist that stands out immediately?

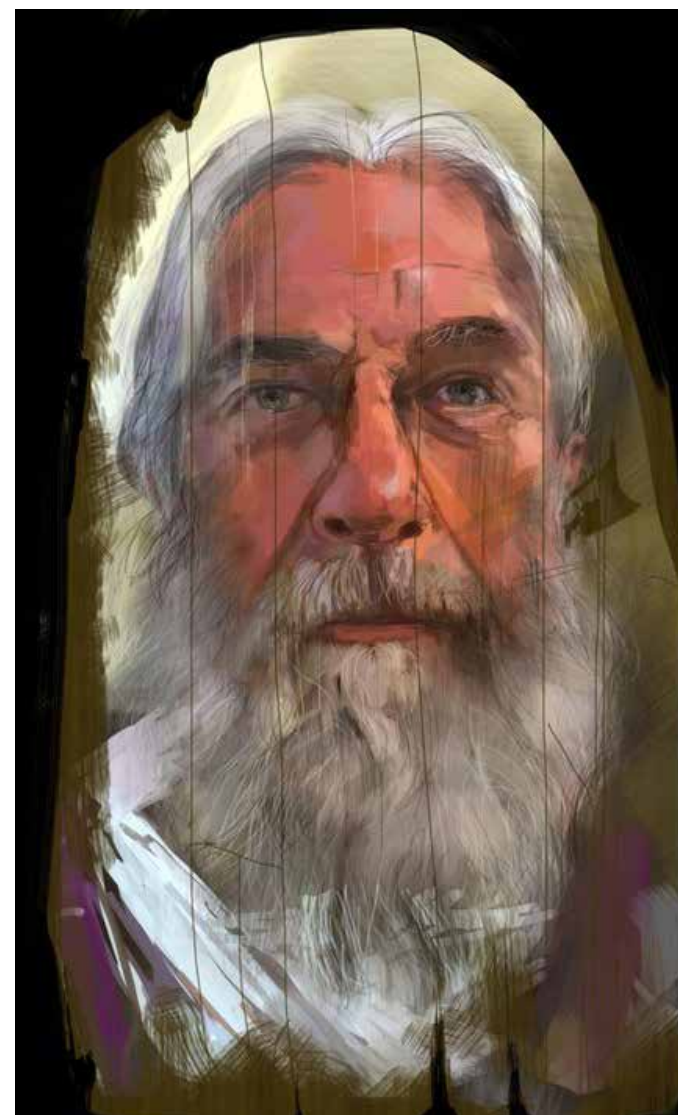
JV: There have been ton of them [laughs]

NW: Kind of like a teacher that sees thousands of students.

JV: Well, I did a series of exhibits in the '80s and '90s where I was looking to get national attention. And it did. We got reviews in the *New York Times*, and exhibitions shown in New York and Chicago and so forth that we created here. I had made a conscious decision in 1990 to focus on building a proper museum, creating a facility that would house a whole museum operation. Then we had to detour with Discovery Square [now Box of Light Studios], which wasn't lost at all. We put a lot of money into the historic buildings there, creating the Children's Museum in 1995, which would not have happened otherwise. It wasn't going to happen on its own. People had been talking about it for years and nobody was doing anything, so we made that happen.

NW: And I feel like it's very tangibly clear how much the museum has grown since the mid-'90s. Obviously physically in 2010, and it's continued to be one of the biggest linchpins of Erie's culture. How do you feel being so closely related with that, almost as a symbol of the Erie Art Museum, if you will?

JV: It's very gratifying. I've been blessed, I feel. It's been wonderful to watch the growth of the arts, to have been able to work with so many different artists, visual



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artists, musical artists, and other kinds of artists. To be able to shape the institution, that's been really gratifying. Personally, I've been able to pick who I work with. That's really important. How many people have jobs where they go there every day and — I don't know what the percentage is — 49 out of 50 days look forward to it? Not a lot of people can say that; I've just been really lucky that way.

NW: What kind of qualities do you see in your successor?

JV: I don't know [laughs], until we have one. But I would hope that they have the same broad-based appreciation for art, an understanding of how art and community relate and intersect and how art can help build community. Those are things that I'm hoping my successor brings to the table, and I'm hopeful.

NW: So, aside from this most recent one, what was your favorite decade to work at the museum?

JV: [thinking a moment] The decade of the '80s I guess. Because that was the other major period of expansion, we moved and developed ClaySpace in the ArtWorks building [now PACA], we moved into the custom house and bought the annex, and then I was able to focus on programming toward the end of that decade. We did the basket exhibition in '86 (*THE Tactile Vessel: New Basket Forms*), and the [Frederick Hurten] Rhead exhibition in '86 (*An English Potter in America*), the Teco exhibition in '89 (*Art Pottery of the Prairie School*), and the [George] Ohr exhibition in '91 (*A Peculiar Vision*). That was heavy stuff. I wanted my exhibitions to

travel to major venues and to be reviewed in major newspapers, and we made it happen.

NW: I'm sure that you've had your share of work stories. Are there any that immediately come to mind, where when you get around a group of people you say "get a load of this?"

JV: I'm sure I have a lot of them. [thinking a moment] I told this at the spring donor luncheon. At one of the Spring Shows, we had a series of residencies with a new music ensemble from Philadelphia called Relâche; they were great, a lot of energy. So they did a performance in the main gallery, when the main gallery was in the customs house. Peter Schjeldahl was the juror that year; he's the art critic for the *New Yorker*. He picked this one work, just to be provocative I think. It was kitchen chair, with a

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plastic-covered seat with a chrome tube frame, a stack of magazines on it, and then this *dead cat* on top of it. This cat crawled into a space under a porch and died and had become desiccated. It was flattened and all dried out, like a mummy.

NW: An actual dead cat?

JV: [laughs] Yes, it was the actual dead cat. Of course it

was very controversial. People challenged "why is this art?" Schjeldahl said "well it's art because it's in this exhibition" [laughs]. There were letters to the editor; you would've thought we killed the cat. But no this was just a dead cat that somebody found. People are funny when it comes to pets.

NW: Essentially it's just a

found object piece.

JV: Exactly, that's what it was, with fur on it. So there was this performance, and during the intermission, we're all hanging around having a drink, there's a couple of college students there, and one of them *grabbed the cat*. We didn't notice it until somebody said "hey the cat's gone," and that caused a minor flur-

Finding his way through the decades, Erie Art Museum Director John Vanco is pictured here in 1960, 1985, and 2010.

ry of activity. Of course the band was kind of into it. So by the end of the performance, one of the college students showed up with the cat. He was embarrassed because his friend took it.

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NW: The cat came back, the very same day! [laughs] Do you remember who made the artwork?

JV: No, it was a person who never responded to our calls to come and pick it up. Eventually it started to smell bad and we pitched it.

NW: So, after retirement, you're still planning on being involved with the Blues and Jazz Fest. What do you think continues to draw you to that event in particular?

JV: Mostly, it's that I couldn't figure out a way to keep it going within the museum, because we're already looking for a director who has museum experience and management experience, an art background, to run a green institution, and to appreciate and understand the historic preservation — because we have five historic buildings — so the idea that we could also get them to run a music festival seemed a little bit of a stretch.

NW: Especially with two specific genres like that. Being a big music fan, and having an extensive record collection like you do, you end up selecting the bands, essentially curating the music festival as

well.

JV: Correct. So the goal with the festival is to keep the part that everyone loves and expand it to other things such as poetry, performance, theatre, and other kinds of music. To become a true community arts festival, but anchored by the Blues and Jazz event, which everybody loves. So my challenge is how to institutionalize something like that. What's particularly hard is the curatorial process. But it can be done. When Celebrate Erie was new, when Rick Filippi re-jiggered We Love Erie Days, it was an arts festival. And Tammy Roche ran it and she got a group of people together that made curatorial decisions.

NW: With 25 years [of the Blues and Jazz Festival], there's a definitely a huge precedent to draw from. Just following that example can be the key.

JV: I hope so. I have a couple of basic philosophical positions that I've articulated running the festival. One is that it's about quality and not about celebrity. In addition to that, I always look for authenticity. Where does this music come from? Because there are two things that are

totally valid, one is coming straight from a tradition, and another is coming straight out of creativity, and being totally unique. Both of those are valid. You can't assess one performer or ensemble based on just one or the other. You have to look at both of those things. Where's the creativity and where's the tradition?

NW: Because you can be a trained Berklee musician, or an outsider from Georgia, and make better art, or not. It's all about when you actually hear it or see it; it doesn't matter where you come from.

JV: The fact that someone is a qualified, trained musician doesn't mean they're great. They're probably competent, but you want somebody who's also inspired. A lot of my favorite music is created by people who have never read music, and can't read music, but it comes out of them, full blown. If you live in a western society with the benefits thereof, you're probably trained to understand how the music you're making is structured and how you can place it within that context. And there are certainly artists in that tradition who create from that perspective. There's

a lot more people out there who are creating just because they're humans and we make music!

NW: You can deconstruct how the actual notes are played, or put on the canvas, but the goal is to essentially make something new, or to make someone feel a certain way, and it doesn't matter how you get from point A to point B.

JV: Doesn't matter to me. I present both kinds of artists. I would tend to favor those from that more intuitive side of the spectrum, whereas classical performers are on the other side.

NW: You have the iconoclastic, honest artists versus the trained draftsmen, and there's room for both. And just because you're an excellent draftsman doesn't mean you're lacking honesty, and vice versa.

JV: Absolutely. I can appreciate draftsmanship, but I can also appreciate an ignorance to it. It's about what ends up on the paper, and not how it got there.

NW: Well, what would be your final thoughts about the future of the museum?

JV: There's an opportunity

for other younger people to really build on what we've created to date. I really hope that some of those core philosophies are appreciated and adopted, and continue to direct the programming and content of the museum, that we'll continue to have a diverse collection that represents different cultures and periods and so forth.

NW: Because for some people, this might be the only art museum that they go to.

JV: Exactly. A lot of regional museums will take a specific focus, such as only collecting American art. That's fine, but there's a whole world out there. We embrace that, and I hope that continues, to not be parochial or provincial about it, or try to artificially focus on something. We're a small community in the Rust Belt; we can be proud of what we have, but we're never going to compete with the big institutions. That's just not the way it works. What we can do is do really good programming and relate to our community. I'm hoping that that's going to continue.

Nick Warren can be reached at Nick@eriereader.com

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Spotlight on Erie

June 7 – 20, 2017

Wednesday, June 7

Mid-day Art Break Aims to Make Your Lunch Break Better



Looking for an excuse to get out of the office?

The Highmark Mid-Day Art Break Series at the Erie Art Museum features live local music and free gallery tours during its weekly lunchtime concerts all summer long.

"Take a break from the working day to dance to some cool jams, find some inspiring artwork in the galleries and leave feeling energized for the rest of your week," said Ally Thomas, EAM Education Coordinator.

The first show is set for Wednesday, June 7 with a performance by Eric Brewer and Friends. The Erie Philharmonic String Quartet will provide music on June 14, and the Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet will be there on June 28. The shows continue every Wednesday until August 30.

Perhaps one of the most unique shows is "World Refugee Day" on June 21.

"I don't have all of the musical performers confirmed yet, but in the past we have had Bhutanese dancers and singers from Ukraine and Palestine," Thomas said. "This year we are hoping to have Syrian musicians."

A fashion show will show off custom-made dresses, suits and other attire between acts. The designs are by Ansumana Komba Gbembo, an African tailor from Sierra Leone.

The EAM works with the refugee community through its education and folk art programs.

The full summer line up will be announced on Wednesday, June 7. But Thomas hinted that the July and August shows will include some new performers.

"The lineup is similar to previous years with returning favorites like the Erie Philharmonic, that are sure to attract large crowds that recognize their

appeal," Thomas said. "We also have a handful of new performers that have never played Mid-Day Art Break."

For example, a singer-and-songwriter showcase this year will highlight young, local women in the Erie music scene.

The shows, she explained, will offer a variety of music. Everyone should be able to find something that fits their musical tastes. There will be orchestral music, bluegrass, jazz-fusion, alternative country and indie rock.

"There are a lot of music events happening in Erie in the summer, and we are happy to be contributing to that scene," Thomas said.

Free gallery tours take place from 12:30 to 1 p.m. Lunch is offered at the Wave Café. — Tracy Geibel

12 to 1 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. // free // 814-459-5477 // www.erieartmuseum.org

Friday, June 9

Two Green Thumbs Up for *Little Shop of Horrors



Azaleas not cooperating this year? Tulips dying off faster than they can bloom? Those are fickle flora, for sure – but not as feisty as a mutant Venus flytrap that literally belts out showtunes in thirst of blood.

Little Shop of Horrors is a 1982 black comedy horror musical based on the 1960 film of the same name. The story centers on lovelorn Seymour Krelborn, a meek florist's assistant with a serious crush on his pretty blonde coworker, Audrey. Lamentably, Audrey is dating deadbeat dentist Orin Scrivello (an unlikely adopter of the greaser aesthetic) and Seymour's boss, Mr. Mushnik, cuts him no slack. Seymour's fate, as well as the fortunes of Mushnik's Skid Row Florists, seem to turn when Seymour happens upon a strange plant in New York's Wholesale Flower District. The neglected neighborhood swarms with publicity thanks to Seymour's pet project, the carnivorous Audrey II.

The only problem is that Audrey II

(hilariously gifted with a rangy R&B singing voice) has a taste for human flesh. Audrey II's insatiable appetite sets the stage for Mushnik's downfall – and the spread of his alien species – in the second act. In short, this play is ridiculous. As such, it has cultivated considerable interest wherever it's been shown, the latest place being our own Erie Playhouse. Powerhouse singer Charlie Bunch lends his voice to Audrey II, with Curtis Jones III (Seymour) and Christine Daugherty (Audrey) assuming the leading roles.

Shows are scattered all throughout June, leaving plenty of time for plans to germinate. – Matt Swanseger

Sunday shows begin at 2:30 p.m.; all others 7:30 p.m. See erieplayhouse.org for the complete list of showings. // 13 W 10th St. // 454-2852 // \$14 (students) - \$22.50 (adults/seniors)

Saturday, June 10

Jeremy Porter & The Tucos Set to Kick Rook's Tookus



With a "sound like guitars and whiskey," Detroit-bred rockers Jeremy Porter & The Tucos offer up "hooks and heartache, energy and passion."

That's the short (and accurate) self-description of the experienced three-piece, who take a page or two out of the songbooks of everyone from Merle Haggard to Husker Du.

Their own songbook in tow, Porter & the Tucos will sound off on the Kings Rook Club stage.

They're being joined that evening by The Broke Boland Band, some of Erie's own progenitors of high-energy, heart-driven, many-influenced musical musings.

Ready or not, the Rook is gonna rock that night. - Ryan Smith

10 p.m. to 2 a.m. // 1921 State St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub // Free for

members

Saturday, June 10

ARTrageous Event Honors and Entertains



In its sophomore year, ARTrageous promises to be an event packed with reasons to attend. The evening is a benefit for the Erie Art Museum and is open to everyone. Evolving from the museum's "pARTy on the patio," ARTrageous will feature a wealth of activities. The event will honor museum director John Vanco for his nearly 50 years of service. While Vanco is set to retire towards the end of August, this will be his official send-off. There will be a champagne toast to Vanco, along with a display highlighting his career.

Along State Street, the museum's front steps will showcase large-scale kinetic sculptures produced by SoMar Dance Works and Deb Sementelli.

Stephen Trohoske and his band will provide a unique fusion of jazz and world beat. Abigail Adams Greenway and Masood Omari, better known as Tabla For Two, will play at the Cashier's house, filling the air with original music for hand drums (tabla) and harmonium.

The *Reader's* own Bryan Toy will even be painting on demand throughout the night.

There will be henna demonstrations at the Customs House, as well as screenprinting with Roman Glass of No Dress Code Studios taking place alongside the Carousel at the Frenzel Gallery.

If you haven't taken a look at the latest Spring Show, now's your chance, as the Main Gallery will be open to all ticket-holders. There will even be a silent disco going on for those eager to don lighted headphones and tune in to DJ John.

Self-proclaimed "Rust Belt Troubador" Matt Texter will be joined by



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Erie County Human Relations Commission
12th Annual Employment Seminar
Thursday, June 22nd 2017

- Criminal Records & Expungements
- LGBT/ Transgender Discrimination in Employment 2017 Program
- Providing a Discrimination and Harassment-free Workplace
- The EEOC's Mediation Process: Using Mediation to Resolve Your Employment Disputes
- 2017 FSLA Updates
- 2017 OSHA Regulatory Enforcement Update
- Confidentiality in Employment
- 6 hours CLE/CEU credits available

Bel-Aire Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, 2800 W 8th St.
9 am - 5 pm • \$40 Includes Continental Breakfast & Lunch
Find out more at www.eriecountypa.gov/hrc
Email: cscalise@eriecountypa.gov or call (814) 451-7021



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HIGHMARK
Mid-Day art break
at the ERIE ART MUSEUM

The Erie Art Museum invites you to enjoy the sounds of summer at the *Highmark Mid Day Art Break* every Wednesday from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. all summer long. Stop down to the Museum's 5th Street patio for live music, lunch specials at our Wave Café, and free gallery tours offered at 12:30 and 1:00 p.m.



JUNE lineup

- June 7: *Eric Brewer and Friends*
- June 14: *Erie Philharmonic String Quartet*
- June 21: *World Refugee Day*
- June 28: *Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet*

Visit erieartmuseum.org for a full music schedule.

Discovery Fridays at the
expERIENCE Children's Museum

Every Friday June 9 – August 25
(10:30am - 11:30am)

Each Friday will feature a special performance or presentation in the outdoor classroom with an engaging activity to follow.

SCHEDULE	
June 9	Sing a-long with Lori Burke
June 16	Music and Movement with Mark Pacileo
June 23	Sing a-long with Lori Burke
June 30	Rock & Roll Pet Show

***SPECIAL \$5**
admission ages 2 & older every Friday
(June 9-August 25) thanks to Erie Insurance.
(Free to museum members)



420 French Street, Erie, PA 16507
www.eriechildrensmuseum.org
(814) 453-3743

violinist/Diddy Bow master Lou Nico-
lia (who might just get mistaken for
Vanco as the evening wears on) in the
Nicholas Gallery on the second floor.
Don't forget to bring your appetite, as
there will be food provided by local
favorites like Avanti's Restaurant, The
Cork 1794, Franco's Cafe, The Plymouth
Tavern, Make It Fabulous, Bourbon
Barrel, Icing on the Lake, and Cali's
West Catering.

Bill Sandusky will be creating an ice
sculpture during the event, while dif-
ferent ice will be provided to guests
who pick up an "adult sno-cone." There
is sure to be no shortage of things to
see, hear, taste, and drink during this
fine evening in June. - Nick Warren

7 p.m. - 11 p.m. // Erie Art Museum, 20 E.
5th St. // \$100 for members, \$125 for non-
members (non-member price includes
one-year individual membership) //
erieartmuseum.org/ARTrageous/

Sunday, June 11

**We Came As Romans
To Set BT Ablaze**



We Came As Romans are return-
ing to Basement Transmissions
as headliners of another huge show
organized by The Entertainment Col-

lective.

We Came As Romans formed in 2006
in Troy, Michigan, and have been an
active part of the national metalcore
scene since the late 2000s. The band's
early work is characteristic of the
sound of the scene of that time, heavy
guitars and harsh vocals countered
by clean sung choruses paired with
synthetic keyboards. Extensive tour-
ing over the years has mellowed their
style, however, and the band's latest
self-titled album on Equal Vision Re-
cords sees the band growing out of
their metalcore roots, embracing in-
stead a more mature alternative rock
sound.

Supporting acts for the show include
fellow Michiganders I See Stars, who
underwent a similar stylistic shift on
their 2016 album *Treehouse*. However,
instead of alternative rock, the band
gravitated towards pop and electronic
music, with inklings of their original
metal influences sprinkled in.

The final supporting act on the bill
is American Sin (formerly known as
Come the Dawn), a metal band from
Cincinnati, Ohio recently signed to
Sumerian Records. To date, they have
released singles and music videos for
the tracks "Empty" and "So Far Down,"
from an album that has yet to be an-
nounced.

This marks the fourth "big" show at
Basement Transmissions in just over
one month. The way things are going,
this is shaping up to be the most event-
ful summer the Erie underground
scene has seen in years — so don't miss
out! - Tommy Shannon

*6 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W.
11th St. // \$25 // All ages // facebook.com

Saturday, June 17

**Chestnut Grove Takes
Root at the Rook**



In a veritable forest full of bands that
I have that certain, now-more-popu-
lar-than-ever raw/rootsey/earthy/back-
country-tinged sound, Chestnut Grove
stands tall — and distinctly noticeable
— amid a lot of other trees.

The Pennsylvania-grown quintet
has seen its efforts bear fruit since it
formed in Perkiomenville, Pa. in 2011,
growing a dedicated fanbase and a
songbook full of heartfelt, groove-wor-
thy original work.

Chestnut Grove will pull from that
pool when they bring their signature
vibe and sound to the Kings Rook
Club. Local rock/pop/dance quartet
The Wildeyes will open and warm up
the floor (and all the feet on it) for the
evening.

Whether it's inside (which this show
is) or out, summer music season in Erie
really is the most wonderful time of
the year. - Ryan Smith

10 p.m. // 1921 State St. // facebook.
com/kingsrookclub // Free for members

Tuesday, June 20

**Thumbscrew to Perform
at the PACA**

The highly-rated band Thumbscrew
will perform at the Performing Art-
ists Collective Alliance fresh off a re-
cent U.S. tour. The band made stops in
New York City, Chicago, Cleveland and
Pittsburgh and has amassed a strong
following among jazz aficionados.

The unique trio — Mary Halvorson on
guitar, Michael Formanek on bass and
Tomas Fujiwara on drums — formed
in late 2011. From the outset, the band
seemed destined to play together. The
members were brought together by
fate one night when Formanek filled
in for the bassist with Halvorson and
Fujiwara's previous band.

"Thumbscrew is a very exciting
group that highlights intricate and
emotionally-driven compositions fo-
cused on intense interactions between
instruments," said Cisco Bradley from
jazzrightnow.com. "One of the most ex-
citing bands currently playing."

In a review by Downbeat magazine,
music critic Martin Longley praised
the band's second album, *Convallaria*,
which was released in May 2016.

"Halvorson, who can slide without a
bottleneck, scatters touches of pinched
distortion across 'Barn Fire Slum
Brew,' developing a halting, explorato-
ry theme," wrote Longley.

Downbeat named Thumbscrew a
"Rising Star Band" two years in a row,
following the January 2014 release of
the trio's self-titled debut. -Tracy Gei-
bel

8 to 10 p.m. // Performing Artists
Collective Alliance, 1505 State St, Fl. 2 //
www.facebook.com

MUSIC

Mid-Day Art Break

June 7, 14 — noon to 1 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State
St. erieartmuseum.org.

**The Concert Band
of Northwest
Pennsylvania Concert**

June 7, 21 — 7 p.m.
Louis C. Cole Auditorium in
Memorial Hall at Edinboro
University, 205 Meadville
St. events.edinboro.edu.

**Rick Magee and
Roadhouse Rockers**

June 9 — 6 p.m.
Coconut Joe's, 28 N.
Park Row cjoes.com.

MoChester

June 9 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921
Peach St. facebook.
com/kingsrookclub.

Theory of Evolution

June 10 — 6 p.m.
Coconut Joe's, 28 N.
Park Row cjoes.com.

**Spring Concert
Series 2017**

June 10, 17, 24 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Lakeview Wine Cellars, 8440
Singer Rd. facebook.com.

**Harbour, Count
to Four, Jurassic
Sk8park, Archway
and Cartwrights**

June 10 — 6 to 10:30 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145
W. 11th St. facebook.com.

**Jeremy Porter & The
Tucos and Broke Boland**

June 10 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921
Peach St. facebook.
com/kingsrookclub.

**Blasco Concert
Series: Millcreek
Community Band**

June 11 — 3 p.m.

H.O. Hirt Auditorium at
Blasco Memorial Library, 160
E. Front St. erielibrary.org.

We Came As Romans

June 11 — 6 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145
W. 11th St. facebook.com.

**Gem City Concert
Band Summer Concert
on the Lawn**

June 13 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
New Hope Presbyterian
Church, 5440 Washington
Ave. gemcitybands.org.

Blue Sky and The Vehicle

June 14 — 5:30 p.m.
Beach 1 at Presque Isle
State Park, 301 Peninsula
Dr. discoverpi.com.

Refuge

June 16 — 6 p.m.
Coconut Joe's, 28 N.
Park Row cjoes.com.

**Summer Music Series:
Bootlegger's Bible Club**

June 16 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Goodell Gardens &
Homestead, 221 Waterford
St. goodellgardens.org.

The LEC

June 16 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921
Peach St. facebook.
com/kingsrookclub.

**Lake Erie Speedway
Summer Kick-off
Music Fest**

June 17 — 11 a.m. to midnight
Lake Erie Speedway,
10700 Delmas Dr.
lakeerispeedway.com.

**Basement Transmission's
Summer Kick-off Show**

June 17 — 5 to 11 p.m.
Basement Transmissions, 145
W. 11th St. facebook.com.

**JazzErie Jazz &
Blues Walk**

June 17 — 6 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411

State St. jazzerie.com.

Motley

June 17 — 6 p.m.
Coconut Joe's, 28 N.
Park Row cjoes.com.

**Maniacal Device,
Vermin Warfare,
Bastard Bastard
Bastard and more**

June 17 — 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Bobbys Place, 1202 W.
18th St. facebook.com.

Chestnut Grove

June 17 — 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921
Peach St. facebook.
com/kingsrookclub.

**Gem City Jazz Ensemble
City of Erie Sounds of
Summer Concert Series**

June 19 — 7 to 8 p.m.
Perry Square Stage, 600
State St. gemcitybands.org.

**Thumbscrew with
Mary Halvorson,**

**Michael Formanek
and Tomas Fujiwara**

June 20 — 8 to 10:30 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St.
jazzerie.com.

Sirsy and The Dock Boys

June 21 — 5:30 p.m.
Beach 1 at Presque Isle
State Park, 301 Peninsula
Dr. discoverpi.com.

DANCE

Long's Dance Concert

June 9, 10 — 7 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State
St. erieevents.com.

It's a Small World

June 9, 10 — 7 to 9 p.m.
Erie Dance Theater,
1603 Cherry St.
eriedancetheater.org.

**Marguerite's Academy
of Dance 27th Annual
Dance Concert**

June 16, 17 — 7 p.m.

Erie Downtown Partnership Shakes Up This Year's Block Parties



STEVE LEITZINGER

STARTING THURSDAY, JUNE 8

Sometimes less is more. This year the Erie Downtown Partnership will hold six instead of ten summertime block parties, but Chief Executive Officer John Buchna says the goal is to make the Thursday night

hurrahs better than ever. "There's so many things to do in Erie, people have to make a choice," he said. "That means a few less block parties, but we are working together with our community partners so everyone has a more enjoyable time." The parties have been strategically

placed around other events, such as Roar of the Shore and Celebrate Erie, that also bring people to downtown.

Through collaboration with the Erie Sports Commission, the block parties will include extra entertainment. The June 22nd block party at the Bayfront will feature a preview show of HydroFlight competitions that will take place later that weekend.

In August, the Erie Downtown Partnership is partnering with the Lake Erie Cycle Fest. A slow roll bicycling event will end at Perry Square Park, where the August 10th party takes place.

This summer also brings venue changes. The parties will take place in parks this year. Locations include Perry Square, Griswold Park, UPMC Park and the Bayfront, more specifically behind the Maritime Museum.

"We were outgrowing certain areas," Buchna said. "And a lot of people like it because it won't affect traffic patterns."

The first Block Party takes place Thursday, June 8 at Perry Square. Local bands Money Shot 2.0 and Super Group will perform on a newly-built stage. Local bars Coconut Joe's and Alkeme will provide drinks.

"This is a changing, regrouping year, but we have big plans for the future," Buchna said.

He wanted guests to know that even though the venues are changing, local entertainment and bars will still be involved at the shows.

Partial proceeds benefit the Care About Revitalizing Erie (CARE), a fund that improves downtown Erie.

For safety reasons, no coolers, pets or bikes are allowed.

If you can't make it to the first party of the season, a complete list of dates is available at eriedowntown.com/calendar. —Tracy Geibel

6:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. // Perry Square, 568 State St. // free // 455-3743 // eriedowntown.com

Warner Theatre, 811 State St. erieevents.com.

Dancing With The Stars Live: Hot Summer Nights

June 21 — 7:30 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

FOOD & DRINK

Mad Mex Benefit Dinner for Clean Water

June 6 — 7 p.m.
Mad Mex Erie in the Millcreek Mall, 5800 Peach St. pennfuture.salsalabs.org.

Tap the Barrel 2017

June 9 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. & June 10 — 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Rd. facebook.com.

Erie Food Tours

June 9, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30 & July 1, 7, 8, 21, 22, 28, 29 — 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Like My Thai, 827 State St. eriefoodtours.com.

Blossom Festival

June 10 — 2 to 9 p.m.
Arundel Cellars, 11727 E. Main Rd. arundelcellars.com.

Sandwich Sunday at the Isle House

June 11, 25 — noon to 3 p.m.
Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Rd. facebook.com.

Picnic in the Park

June 15, 22, 29 — 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Gibson Park, 31 W. Main St. facebook.com.

Pizza Party

June 15 — 5 to 8 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. facebook.com.

BBQ, Beer & Beards

June 16 — 5 to 8 p.m.
Erie Ale Works, 416 W. 12th St. facebook.com.

Brewtique

June 17 — 6 to 10 p.m.
The Brewerier at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewerier.com.

FILM

Extreme Weather

Ongoing — 11 a.m. & 1 & 3 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. biggreenscreen.com.

Lewis & Clark: Great Journey West

Ongoing — noon & 4 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. biggreenscreen.com.

Prehistoric Planet

Ongoing — 2 & 5 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. biggreenscreen.com.

Videodrome (1983)

June 9 — 8 to 10 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 W. Lake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Calendar Girl (1947)

June 17 — 8 to 11 p.m.
Erie Movie House, 3424 W. Lake Rd. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

VISUAL ARTS

Earth Stories

Ongoing through June 11
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Lucid Dreams by Joanne Loew

Ongoing through June 20
Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. 5th St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Photographs by Gary Cardot

Ongoing through June 24
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Dreams, Visions and Other Realities: Collective Works by Ann St. George

Ongoing through June 30
PACA, 1503 State St. annabellasdesign.com.

94th Annual Spring Show

Ongoing through July 9
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Erie County Art Teachers

Ongoing through Aug. 11
Mercyhurst University Cummings Gallery, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Tin Plated Dreams: Sculptures by William Brady, Jr.

Ongoing through January 7, 2018
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Second Sundays

June 11 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

THEATRE

Romeo & Juliet

June 9, 10 — 7:30 to 10 p.m. & June 11 — 3 to 5:30 p.m.
All an Act Theatre, 652 W. 17th St. allanact.net.

Little Shop of Horrors

June 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24 — 7:30 p.m. & June 18, 25 — 2 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10 St. erieplayhouse.org.

Reefer Madness by Kevin Murphy and Dan Studney

June 9, 10, 16, 17 — 8 p.m.
Dramashop on 2nd Floor of Renaissance Centre, 1001 State St. facebook.com.

Sex Please, We're Sixty

June 11, 18, 25 — 2:30 p.m.

& June 13, 14, 21 — noon & June 17, 24 — 5:30 p.m.

Station Dinner Theatre, 4940 Peach St. canterburyfeast.com.

COMMUNITY

Yoga

Ongoing through Aug. 28 — 5:30 & 7:15 p.m.
Barracks Beach in Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Evening Lagoon by Pontoon

Ongoing through Sept. 1 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Lagoon Boat Launch in Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Lagoon by Pontoon

Ongoing through Sept. 4 — 10 a.m.
Lagoon Boat Launch in Presque Isle State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Plasha Yoga

June 7 — 5:30 to 9 p.m.
Liberty Park, 1 Lawrence Pier plashayoga.com.

Adult Art Classes

June 8 — 1 to 3 p.m.
LEAF Education Center, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

American Short Stories

June 8, 15, 22 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org.

New Horizons Music Project

June 8, 15, 22 — 4 to 6 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org.

Block Party

June 8 — 6 to 10 p.m.
Perry Square, 568 State St. eriedowntown.com.

McDowell High School Graduation

June 8 — 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com.

History of the Steinway & Sons Piano Company

June 8 — 7 p.m.
Erie Maennerchor Club, 1607 State St. gcsoe.org.

Shoot the Rock NTBA Summer National Qualifier

June 9, 10, 11
Family First Sports Park, 8155 Oliver Rd. eriesportscommission.com.

Cruise Town Erie Car Show

June 9 — 5 to 10 p.m.
Perry Square, 568 State St. eriedowntown.com.

Wishing on a Star Canvas Class

June 9 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Kings Rook Club

THIRSTY THURSDAYS
Drink Specials

\$2
WELLS & ALL DOMESTICS (8-11PM)

\$3
ALL CRAFTS (8-11PM)

\$3.50
LONG ISLANDS (9-10PM)

\$2
FIREBALL SHOTS (9-10PM)

DOORS 8PM | MUSIC 10PM

EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT!

Grab your gear and get here! • 10PM

No Cover • Drink Specials • Open 8 PM

[Sign up before 10 PM & first drink is on us!]

****NO COVER FOR MEMBERS EXCEPT SPECIAL EVENTS****
Music at 10pm • Fri & Sat Happy Hour Specials: \$2 Wells & select beers 8pm-12am • Free pool, shuffleboard & games always!!! • 1921 Peach St. • Members & guests only
Find us on Facebook : www.facebook.com/kingsrookclub

****NO COVER FOR MEMBERS EXCEPT SPECIAL EVENTS****

THURS 06/08
PAINT & ROCK
FRI 06/09
MOCHESTER
SAT 06/10
JEREMY PORTER & THE TUCOS
+ BROKE BOLAND
THURS 06/15
PAINT & ROCK
FRI 06/16
THE LEC
SAT 06/17
CHESTNUT GROVE + THE WILDEYES
FRI 06/23
MARBIN
SAT 06/24
THE CLOCK READS
THURS 06/29
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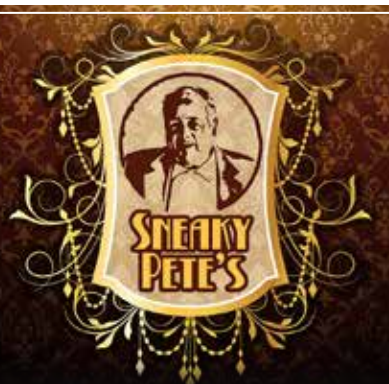
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Wings of Hope

Butterfly Release



SAVE THE DATE
Sunday, August 13, 2017

Join us for the 12th anniversary of the Visiting Nurse Association of Erie County's **Wings of Hope** memorial butterfly release on Sunday, August 13, 2017 at 1:00 pm at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine West Campus, 2000 W. Grandview Blvd. The release of butterflies is a moving and fitting tribute to the lives of those we love, living or deceased. The event will include the release of hundreds of monarch butterflies and a non-denominational service of remembrance for loved ones of those in attendance. To sponsor a butterfly, contact the Visiting Nurse Association at **(814) 454-2831**. The event is free and open to the public.

The Visiting Nurse Association of Erie County, now part of LECOM Health, is a non-profit community agency that has been providing home health and hospice services to the Erie Community since 1906.

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Sunset Music Series Turns Up for 2017

Summer tradition clear for takeoff with Allmans-tribute Blue Sky



STEVE LEITZINGER

Like Jennifer Dennehy's hula hoop, the Sunset Music Series is always in Erie's summer rotation.

of Allman Brothers founding member Gregg Allman, but that night's performance is sure to serve as a more-than-apt send-off to the late legend.

Next up, on June 20, the series welcomes back Albany-based rock-'n-soul duo Sirsy. That Rust Belt-hewn girl/guy duo — being joined that night by opener The Dock Boys — has become rather familiar with (and well-heard in) our fair city, having played repeat shows at various Erie locales and events like the UPMC series in recent years.

The series continues with The Groove and opens The O'Neiders on June 28, Stilleto and opens Guru on July 5, Key West Express and opens Brenna Bone and Seann Clark on July 12, and, to cap the 2017

series off, Tennessee Back Porch with openers Jackson Station on July 19.

Add in all the other fun happening at every show — hula hoop workshops, food, raffles, and other cool stuff — and we

Dynamic duo: SIRSY, consisting of Melanie Krahmer (drums) and Rich Libutti (guitar), have become quite adept at multitasking. No limb is spared as the two split bass duties here at last year's Sunset Music Series.

have one helluva sweet little summer getaway. Right in our own backyard. And in the middle of the week.

Awesome.
And remember: Every installment of the UPMC Sunset Music Series is free for all of us. — Ryan Smith

5:30 p.m. // Presque Isle Beach 1, Peninsula Drive // discoverpi.com; 838.5138 ext. 101



STEVE LEITZINGER

STARTING WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14

With those stunning, only-in-Erie sundowns serving as its remarkably beautiful backdrop, the annual UPMC Sunset Music Series kicks off its 2017 season this month and continues on Wednesday eve-

nings through July.

First up, on June 14, is the longstanding and seriously legit locally-based Allman Brothers Band tribute Blue Sky, being joined by local (and also seriously legit) blues-rockers The Vehicle. The schedule was made before the recent death

Claytopia, 924 W. Erie Plaza
Dr.heathercash.com.

Young People's Chorus White Party Event

June 9 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Courtyard by Marriott
Erie Bayfront, 2 Sassafras
Pier. facebook.com.

Erie 2017 Quilt Celebration

June 10 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. &
June 11 — 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Holy Cross Church, 7100 West
Ridge Rd. facebook.com.

First Time Archery Program

June 10 — 10 a.m. to noon
Playfield at Presque Isle
State Park, 301 Peninsula
Dr. events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Cocktails and Clay

June 10 — 3 to 5:30 p.m. &
6 to 8:30 p.m.
Erie Clayspace, 1505 State
St. erieclayspace.com.

Lake Erie 75

June 10 — 5 to 11 p.m.
Lake Erie Speedway,
10700 Delmas Dr.
lakeerispeedway.com.

Artrageous

June 10 — 7 to 11 p.m.
Erie Art Museum, 411 State
St. erieartmuseum.org.

Xavier and Tina Williams Summer Youth Business Academy

June 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
Edinboro University,
219 Meadville St. events.edinboro.edu.

Sunday Morning Stroll: Long Pond Trail

June 11 — 10 to 11:30 a.m.
East Pier Parking Lot
at Presque Isle State
Park, 301 Peninsula Dr.
events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Pilates Class with Michaelee Curtze

June 11, 18, 25 & July 2, 9,
16, 23, 30 & Aug. 6, 13, 20,
27 — 11 a.m. to noon
Goodell Gardens &
Homestead, 221 Waterford
St. goodellgardens.org.

Progress Toward Equality

June 11 — 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Erie County Courthouse
Steps, 140 W. 6th St.
greatereriealliance.com.

Kids' Fest

June 11 — 1 to 5 p.m.
Goodell Gardens &
Homestead, 221 Waterford
St. goodellgardens.org.

Afternoon for Equality

June 11 — 2 to 6 p.m.
21 La Rue Dix, 21 W. 10th St.

greatereriealliance.com.

Fairy Garden Canvas Class

June 12 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Claytopia, 924 W. Erie Plaza
Dr. heathercash.com.

Memories Matter Dementia Support Group

June 12 — 6:30 p.m.
Services Building at Edinboro
University, 215 Scotland
Rd. events.edinboro.edu.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Binghamton Mets

June 13, 14 — 7 p.m. &
June 15 — noon
UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th
St. erieevents.com.

Girard High School Graduation

June 13 — 7 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State
St. erieevents.com.

Farmers Market

June 14, 21, 28 & July 5, 12, 19,
26 & Aug. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 & Sept.
6, 13, 20, 27 — 3 to 6 p.m.
Goodell Gardens &
Homestead, 221 Waterford
St. goodellgardens.org.

Preservation Erie Backstage Tour

June 14 — 6 p.m.
St. Hedwig Church, 521 E. 3rd
St. preservationerie.org.

Valley World Junior Pool Tournament

June 15 — noon to 11 p.m. &
June 16, 17 — 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.
& June 18 — 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1
Sassafras Pier erieevents.com.

Lake City Fire Company 92nd Annual Carnival

June 15, 16 — 5 p.m. &
June 17 — 1 p.m.
Lake City First Station, 2232
Rice Ave. lakecityfire.org.

Paint and Rock

June 15 — 8 to 10:30 p.m.
Kings Rook Club, 1921 Peach St.
facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Atlantic Coast Baseball Tournament

June 16, 17, 18
Mercyhurst University, 501 E.
38th St. playacbaseball.com.

The 28th Annual UUCE Garage Sale

June 16, 17 — 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist
Congregation of Erie, 7180
Perry Hwy. uuerie.org.

City/County All Star Baseball Game

June 16 — 7 p.m.
UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th
St. erieevents.com.

USA Volleyball National Junior Beach Tour

June 17
Beach 11 at Presque Isle
State Park, 301 Peninsula Dr.
eriesportscommission.com.

Keystone Bass Buddy Erie Bay Tournament

June 17 — 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Presque Isle State
Park, 301 Peninsula Dr.
eriesportscommission.com.

10th Annual BaySwim

June 17 — 9 a.m.
Beach 1 Parking Lot at
Presque Isle State Park, 301
Peninsula Dr. discoverpi.com.

Annual Fishing Derby

June 17 — 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
YMCA Camp Sherwin, 8600
W. Lake Rd. ymcaerie.org.

Kick Off To Summer

June 17 — 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Christ United Methodist
Church, 2615 W. 32nd
St. eriechrist.org.

Bicycle Tour

June 17 — 10:30 a.m.
to 12:30 p.m.
Cookhouse Pavilion Parking
Lot at Presque Isle State
Park, 301 Peninsula Dr.
events.dcnr.pa.gov.

Erie SeaWolves vs. Portland Sea Dogs

June 19, 20 — 7 p.m.
& June 21 — noon

UPMC Park, 110 E. 10th
St. erieevents.com.

Branching Out

June 20, 27 & July 11, 18, 25 &
Aug. 1, 8 — 10 a.m. to noon
LEAF Education Center,
1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

World Refugee Day

June 20 — 5 to 8 p.m.
Habibi, 149 W. 14th St.
facebook.com.

Our Water, Our Air, Our Rights Steering Committee Meeting

June 20 — 5:30 to 7 p.m.
Erie Neighborhood Art House,
201 E. 10th St. warights.org.

Porreco College Open House

June 20 — 3 to 6 p.m.
Porreco College of Edinboro
University, 2951 W. 38th
St. events.edinboro.edu.

Labyrinth Celebration: Joyful Solstice Celebration

June 21 — 1 to 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.
LEAF Education Center,
1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org.

Dandelions and Bees Canvas Class

June 21 — 6 to 8 p.m.
Claytopia, 924 W. Erie Plaza
Dr. heathercash.com.

A Word From The Weyes

Local Rapper Trying to Make a Name for Erie Hip-Hop



DAVID DESIN PHOTOGRAPHY

William Weyes performs his most popular single "Escape" during a February 18 show at Basement Transmissions.

unrestrained, aggressive style; many others grew to despise it. However, no one could deny the originality and assertiveness of the voice that was definitively his, one that had successfully hollowed out a niche in a predominantly African-American domain.

Weyes is not nearly the rable-rouser Eminem was in his heyday, but has sought to gain the respect of the hip-hop community via the same blueprint – hard work and remaining true to himself. A poet since childhood, Weyes began rapping as a seventh grader, recording with DJ equipment donated by his older brother Angelo Menuto. Weyes has never been involved with drugs any other illicit activities, so he doesn't write about them. Instead, he addresses the ups-and-downs of relationships, the doubters from without, and the doubts from within (he is a long-time sufferer of depression and anxiety). Sure, the streets represent a form of conflict faced by many, but "all of us have at some point waged similar battles within ourselves and/or against society's norms and expectations.

Real recognizes real, and Weyes' commitment and authenticity have helped garner some legitimate attention, most notably from Pittsburgh-area producer Big Jerm, who has also worked with Wiz Khalifa and Mac Miller, two of the most prolific rappers to come out of western Pennsylvania. Weyes' sound draws heavily from trap music, replete with bone-shaking bass drops, skittering hi-hats, and orchestral flourishes. Recent releases such as "Ran-

William Weyes walks off the stage after opening for Chief Keef at Basement Transmissions on February 18.

dall" (featuring Houston's Riff Raff) hit hard, reflecting Weyes' growing self-assurance.

"I started it about a year ago, but I didn't have the confidence or swagger to match the song. It's a cocky kind of record, so I had to get a point where I was comfortable enough talking shit and could back it up with achievements."

Other releases, such as debut single "Genius" and last year's "Escape," feature a more introspective vibe, incorporating chilled ambient electronic textures reminiscent of A\$AP Rocky, Travis Scott, and Anderson.Paak. To date, Weyes has released a total of twelve tracks and recorded bits and pieces of several others — certainly enough to fill an album.

"I want to put it out this year. But then again, I've been saying that for the past two or three years."

Big-time collaborations "She Go Down" (with D-Roc of the multi-platinum Ying Yang Twins) clearly indicate Weyes' ascent, but he remains humble and calculating with his approach. "I'm very anal about my music — it has to be perfect. I don't like to just throw shit out there."

First, he aims to conquer the local scene – but before that can happen, one has to exist. "There are talented people here, but they don't go about promoting themselves the way

they should. No one's looking for local hip-hop music, and nothing happens for [the artists]. I don't know what we can do to fix that."

Weyes has been poorly compensated (if it all) for his Erie shows, which are usually sparsely attended (crowds of as few as 20). His solution, therefore, has been to put Erie on the map via Pittsburgh, with its more receptive audiences and more established resources for promoting talent. He produces most of his tracks at the Steel City's ID Labs, working alongside Big Jerm and others. Despite his detractors' claims that he has abandoned his hometown, he believes his methods will pay off for both him and Erie in the end. "My plan is to get their attention and bring that back home."

For now, Weyes is focused on honing his craft, dropping singles, and expanding his fan base at home (a new apparel line via good friend R.J. Messenger's Iron Empire Clothing) and abroad (music videos on YouTube and steaming audio on SoundCloud). The day may yet come when the Erie hip-hop scene has arrived. Either way, he would love to bring it up.

To watch Willie Weyes' music videos, visit www.youtube.com/williamweyes.

To listen to his original songs and remixes, visit www.soundcloud.com/williamweyes.

By Matt Swanseger

Hardship, struggle, despair, anger – this is Erie. Pride, resilience, grit, hope – this is Erie, too. Hip-hop is the study of inner-city dichotomy, the downward crush of circumstances and the upward surge to resist them. Erie possesses all the prerequisite ingredients for a hip-hop hotbed, yet it remains largely submerged, seething with potential but never bubbling to the surface. Marooned between the East Coast and West Coast, Erie's hip-hop scene is a landmass that has yet to form.

Unlike the city it fringes, Millcreek Township would not seem nearly as chaotic or complicated – a dead end here is more often a cul-de-sac than the unemployment line or a life of crime. It is surprising, then, that one of the region's emergent rappers is a Mohawk-wearing, 23 year-old graduate of McDowell High School. Kohler William Palkovic, who goes by the stage name Willie Weyes (pronounced "wise"), was born in Erie but moved to Millcreek at an early age. He remembers the moment he first heard his

calling vividly.

It was late one summer evening when Weyes took the controls of his uncle's boat. The sun had sunk halfway beneath the Lake Erie horizon, looming in the distance like a red-orange portal to another realm. His sister switched the radio on and the youngster's ears were greeted with the rapid-fire verse of Eminem. "Who is this?" he asked. As dusk fell, it dawned on him – this is what he wanted to do.

"It sounds super cliché – I mean, what white rapper doesn't like Eminem? But I had never heard anything like it before. It blew my f---ing mind."

Eminem (born Marshall Mathers) was firing on all cylinders when he was pulled from the rusted-out wreckage of the Motor City, with his first two albums (*The Slim Shady LP and *The Marshall Mathers LP) heralded by many as instant classics in the genre – dark, twisted works of lyrical genius. Meanwhile, parents and advocacy groups cringed, as Mathers seemed to invite controversy with his incendiary rhymes. Many grew to love his



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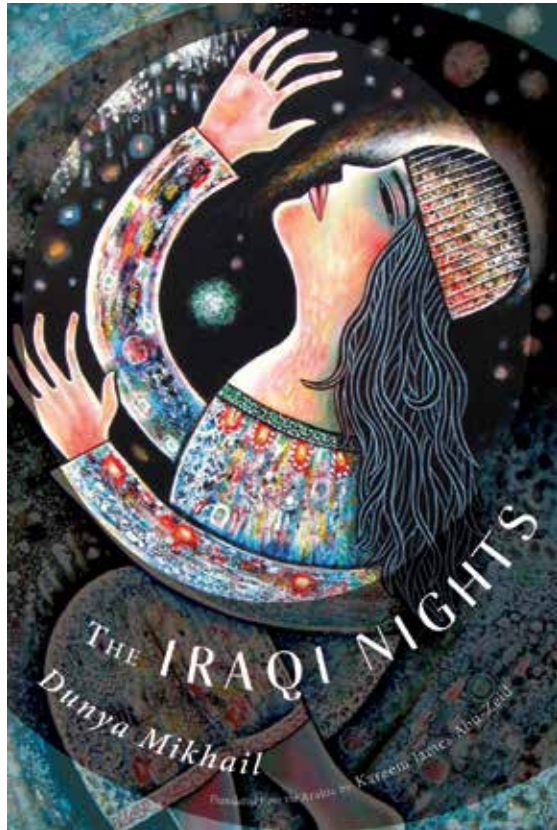
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BOOK REVIEW

A Review of *The Iraqi Nights*

A contemporary Scheherazade caught between Baghdad and America.



By: John Repp

This collection's title sequence sets its tone: "While shopping for a gift for her lover, Tammuz, a contemporary Iraqi named Ishtar is abducted by "some masked men" who drag her into "the underworld through seven gates." On each of these gates, Ishtar writes a poem that helps tell the fragmented story of her love for both Tammuz and her homeland. The poems incorporate history, myth, and intimate lyricism, from the centuries that have passed "since Scheherazade told her tale" to the undimmed power of the Epic of Gilgamesh to Ishtar's hope that soon "chickens in the villages/won't peck at human flesh" to her certainty that Tammuz "would cross thousands of miles/for the sake of a single cup of tea/poured by my own hand."

Throughout *Iraqi Nights*, the clarity of the images and the measured pace at which they unfold repeatedly crack the reader's heart. In plainspoken lines that juxtapose everyday concerns with the horrors of war, the poems employ understatement to devastating effect, like many poems written in places and times of great suffering. Such an approach opens the way for humor, usually dry as dust, but occasionally

broad, and always an embodiment of rebellion. We visit a bustling store that sells tears, where a woman "wants to return her bottle" because she "went back/and forth/between parking spots" instead of crying for a lost friend. The "monsters" in "Iraqis and Other Monsters" "rub their moustaches when they make promises" as "smoke pours out/of their massive noses." In "A Second Life," "we write poetry and pass away,/and need a second life/to know the critics' opinions."

Perhaps the most memorable stretch in a memorable book is the 24-poem sequence entitled "Tablets," in which haiku-like passages share the page with visual elements hard to characterize yet compelling as all get-out. A rough-and-ready

combination of Arabic calligraphy, abstracted images reminiscent of hieroglyphics, and sketches that recall comics panels, Mikhail sets up a conversation between forms that's mutually enriching. On my current favorite of these pages, a two-line poem hovers above a drawing in which petroglyphic fish, a scribble of a woman balancing a jug atop her head, two hands reaching toward one another, and several other elements fulfill the poem's vision:

*My heart's quite small:
That's why it fills so quickly.*

To paraphrase Walt Whitman, the human heart contains multitudes. *Iraqi Nights* deserves a place among the books that prove this permanent truth.

The Iraqi Nights, by Dunya Mikhail (trans. Kareem James Abu-Zeid), *New Directions*, 2013, 83pp., \$15.95

The poems in John Repp's most recent chapbook (Music Over the Water, Alice Greene & Co., 2013) are set in or near Presque Isle State Park. He coordinates the Writing Concentration at Edinboro University and teaches courses in every genre the Concentration offers.

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MUSIC REVIEWS

Nick Hakim
Green Twins
 ATO



Unlike other denizens of our nation's capital, D.C.-area singer-songwriter Nick Hakim makes no pretense of draining the swamp on his debut campaign *Green Twins*. He embraces a brand of R&B as bleary as the eyeballs that adorn the album cover, packing layers onto his throwback sound like warm, rich sediment. Many of these songs inhabit a sort of musical twilight, striking and beautiful, but hinting at encroaching dark. This vibe is especially prominent during the album's second half. "Farmissplease" simultaneously soothes and unsettles with ghostly guitar effects, decaying electric piano chords, and wailing double-tracked vocals. "The Want" and "Those Days" are something like a beachside fever dream, washing over the listener in a haze of lush harmonies, druggy saxophone, and swaying conga rhythms - think Timmy Thomas' "Why Can't We Live Together" updated for 2017. Simple instrumentation introduces musical ideas, which grow progressively denser as the tracks unfold ("Roller Skates," "Busy Bees"). This is smooth soul underneath a psychedelic mud mask, and well worth opening your pores to.

- Matt Swanseger



Paramore
After Laughter
 Fueled by Ramen



At first glance (especially to the uninitiated), the sonic shift of Paramore's new album, *After Laughter*, could be traced back to the success of '80s-gravedigging pop bands like The 1975 or even Tegan and Sara. But those who are weary of the band's pop-punk roots would do themselves a disservice by dismissing the new direction as manufactured before giving it a proper listen, because that's all it takes to realize *After Laughter* is as genuine a record as Paramore have ever created. Behind the colorful keyboards and Talking Heads-esque vocal inflections is something much darker as frontwoman Hayley Williams does her best to address the barrage of rumors that have surrounded her personal life and the departure of certain band members since Paramore's initial success. On obvious single choice "Rose Colored Boy," Williams strikes back at those telling her to smile, warning, "I ain't gonna smile if I don't want to/Hey man, we all can't be like you/I wish we were all rose-colored too." And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the album's best moments are tender ballads where Williams' vocal improvements shine most.

- Aaron Mook



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spin
 Black Cement Records



Don't get it twisted; *spin* is a good album from Tigers Jaw, a band who has historically released good albums in the past. The emo revival band hails from Scranton, Pennsylvania, with the group now only consisting of two members (Brianna Collins on vocals and keys and Ben Walsh on everything else), paired with the fact that *spin* is the first release ever on the new Atlantic-imprint Black Cement Records, there's a lot riding on this release. And a lot of it works. For the band's fifth studio album, the songs here are more straightforward and hook-oriented than ever before. Collins steals the album's best moments, and at times her songs are somewhat reminiscent of a modern Fleetwood Mac. Put simply, there's nothing wrong with *spin* aside from its memorability, a factor that has plagued nearly every Tigers Jaw release. Thus, *spin* is a strange record, a hybrid of some of the band's best material as well some that could get lost in the shuffle of their previous releases. But *spin* may be the transitional album that leads Tigers Jaw from being a "good band" to a great one.

- Aaron Mook



Justin Townes Earle
Kids In The Street
 New West

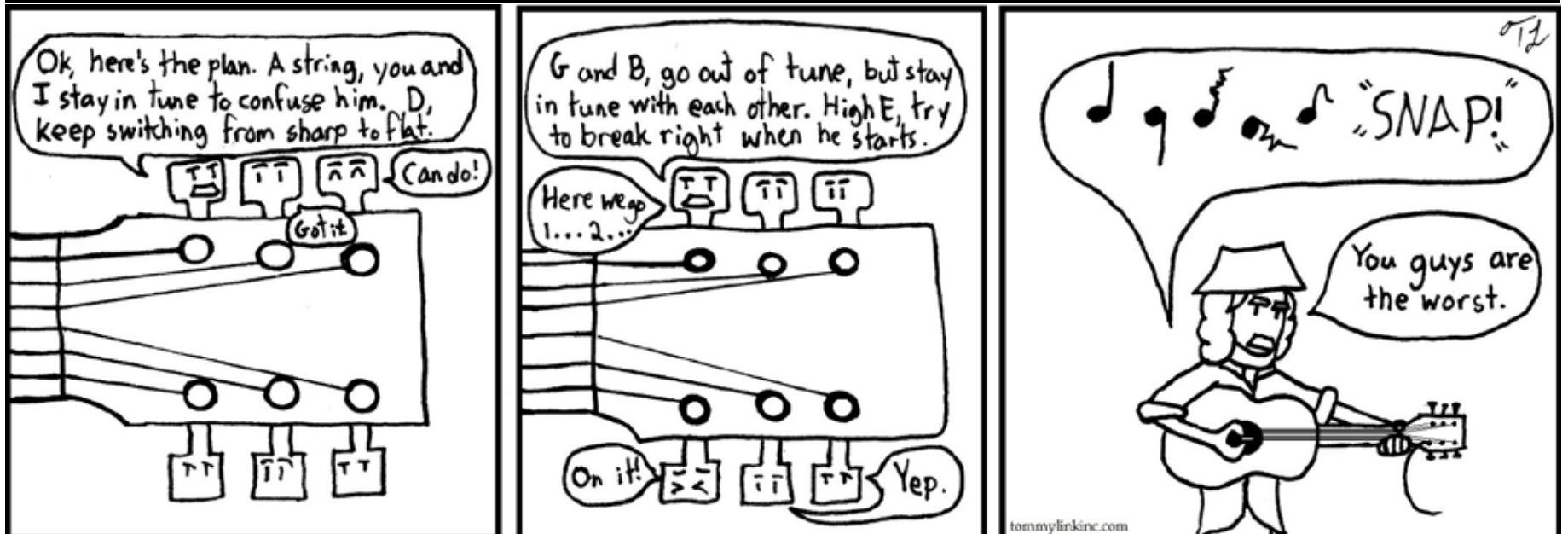


For his eighth studio album, Justin Townes Earle is heating things up a bit. The son of respected country star Steve, Earle the younger is quite the well-known artist in his own right. The Nashville songwriter continues to mine the great American songbook for fresh inspiration on *Kids In The Street*, bringing lively, toe-tapping shuffles with nearly every song. There's a subtle energy in *Kids*, notes lingering with an inviting quaintness that's difficult to duplicate. This album is his third with producer Mike Mogis (Bright Eyes, She & Him), someone keenly adept at such anachronistic mimicry. The album starts off with the smoky honky-tonk purr of "Champagne Corolla," a boot-stomping (and rare) tribute to the Japanese made car. The engine continues to rev for the majority of the record's first half, until the titular, title-case-be-damned "Kids In The Street," a lovingly mournful reflection of days gone by. There's Earle's contribution to wild west myths in "Same Old Stagolee," while the final, organ-tinged tracks of the album take the listener to church.

- Nick Warren



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